

Minutes of a meeting of Quakers in Yorkshire

Held at Doncaster FMH

on Saturday 26th April 2025

Representatives

A total of 60 Friends attended in person and we were joined by 4 Friends online.

1. Reading

In our opening worship we have heard read Advices & Queries number 1 and the first paragraph of 1.01 from Quaker faith & practice.

2. Welcome

Our clerks have welcomed us to this, our second meeting of 2025, and introduced our agenda to us. In the morning session we consider the spiritual benefits arising from the process of Simplification that is currently taking place in Yorkshire. The Recording Clerk, Paul Parker, joins with us today and will share experiences of other Friends and their meetings as they have realised the benefits from going through similar processes. The afternoon session will be led by Bridget Holtom from QPSW based on the theme of Peace. We will close the meeting with a longer period of silence.

Jill Cooper welcomed us to Doncaster LM and dealt with the housekeeping matters for today. Jill will be the fire safety person for this morning and Sallie Ashe for the afternoon session.

We appoint Joy Paul and Denise Cann to act as Elders for this meeting.

2. Simplification in Yorkshire; how might our meetings benefit

At our meeting in April 2019 Paul Parker spoke about the simplification of processes and where that may lead the Society of Friends. For the 80 or 90 Friends in attendance it was an eye-opening moment that led to the creation of GRASP, the Group to Reinvigorate and Simplify Processes, with the basic premise being to support and enhance Local Meetings, with worship our core practice.

With this in mind, we are pleased to welcome back Paul Parker to share with us the experience of other Friends who have embarked on similar pathways to the future. At the end of his talk there will be time for questions before breakout groups, based on Area Meetings, consider how our own meetings may respond.

Paul Parker explained his role as Recording Clerk, especially dealing with the processes and discipline within the Society of Friends as well as looking after 190 staff members in BYM. He is also the public voice for the Society of Friends.

A lot has been happening in Yorkshire and the UK since 2019; a huge achievement but there is plenty still to do. However, there is a further element: how we get to a spiritual focus in what we are doing. Paul quoted from QF&P 20.27, from North Carolina YM, moving us towards to simplicity. In 20.29 we heard of the thoughts of William Penn, and were then asked to consider how this simplicity might influence our Area Meetings. If we are Seekers of the 'Truth' can we remove those items that prevent us from moving towards spirituality through simplicity?

Can we keep material matters and spirituality in balance, recognising that there are matters we need to deal with from time to time? Life in a movement can be energising but unless there is a discipline in an organisation there can be fragmentation, regardless of the merits of the cause. Belonging helps us to feel part of something, but organisations can be stuck in structure and eventually move into the past, regardless of the initial enthusiasm.

God can move through any structure — a spirituality to energise individuals and reminding the organisation of why it exists. We are perhaps lacking some energy, saying 'yes' too often rather than clearing out occasionally, and saying 'no'. But it also reflects how quickly the world is changing.

The weekly timetable has many more activities, demographic changes in Quaker families and more disposable incomes to fund activities. There are fewer Quakers who have been Quaker all their lives, whilst young Quakers may be misunderstood by older Friends.

There are some bright signs of more young people searching for a spiritual home, whilst there are some disconcerting changes in modern life that affect most of our lives.

It all takes time and energy to place us as a relevant organisation within the faith communities. Regulation is changing what we do and how we do it, but in terms of items such as safety we are rightly held accountable.

The online community provides a different perspective, that for some represents an essential form of connection, and even a local meeting that only meets online. We are still welcoming to all and are, hopefully, not judgmental about others who seek our company in worship.

If we had a clear out of roles, what can it free us up to do?

The question for today and for our meetings should be:

What are we going to do with all that space arising from a clear out of processes?

Don't fill it with other stuff, but create some fresh air, with spiritual, meaningful work. Be involved in Quaker work or encourage families to attend our meetings. Can we do something active?

We heard 20.36 from Quaker Faith 7 Practice by Thomas Kelly: in effect are we too busy because we do not say 'no' often enough?

Each AM had the opportunity to consider the question in break out groups. Amongst the main points we heard:

Sharing our spiritual journey with each other.

Bringing the Woodbrooke experience to us in person.

Encouraging young people to interview older Friends.

'Speed dating' after meeting.

Improve communications on decisions taken, through social media.

Enrich our own understanding of Quakerism.

Ensuring a warm and safe welcome to young people.

Ensuring attention given to 'inreach' as well as outreach.

Make the nominations aware of the spiritual nature for the role holders and their communicating that to Friends at meeting for worship.

Communication should cover the local context, within a gathered group.

Hosting Kindlers workshops to develop new lines of approach.

We thank Paul Parker for providing such an enlightening prelude to our deliberations in the breakout groups. There are plenty of ideas to take back to our AMs and LMs as to how we might reinvigorate our meetings.

3. Appointments and Releases

Release from Service

Position	Released	AM
Nominations Committee	Veronica O'Mara	Leeds

We agree to the release, with immediate effect, and give thanks for the service our Friend has given.

Appointments

(i) From Quakers in Yorkshire Nominations Committee:

We have received the following nomination:

Position	Nominated	Notes
Safeguarding Coordinator	Alex Parker [S&BAM]	from 26/04/2025 to 31/12/2027

(ii) From Area Meetings:

We have received the following nomination:

Position	Nominated	Notes
Outreach Projects Committee	Elizabeth Hodgson [CYAM]	until 31/12/2025

These nominations being acceptable, the named Friends are appointed accordingly.

(iii) From the Schools:

Releases:

We have received the following requests for release from service:

Name	School	Notes
Ed Potten	Bootham	At end of First term
Jon Lovett	Bootham	At end of First term
Juliette Healey	Bootham	From 31/12/2025
Keith Knight	Bootham	Already in effect

We accept these releases and thank those named for their service.

Nominations:

We have received the following nominations:

Position	Nominated	Notes
Governor, Bootham School	Catherine Wragg	From 26/04/2025 to 31/12/2028
Governor, Bootham School	Marcus Elmhirst	From 26/04/2025 to 31/12/2028
Governor, Bootham School	Carol Cameron	From 01/09/2025 to 31/12/2028

The appointments are normally for 4 years and will be clarified with the School. These nominations being acceptable, those named are appointed accordingly.

We thank all these Friends for accepting nomination for service.

We thank our nominations committees for their diligent work in attending to all our appointments.

Area Meetings which currently do not have a Friend appointed to serve on QiY Nominations are asked to see if they could attend to the 'vacancy'.

4. Notices

- i) Quaker Voices on Mental Health, a Quaker Recognised Body, are inviting you to an event to celebrate the publication, by Quacks of York of two books: the extraordinary and unique 'The Identity Parade' by Simon Miles, compiled and edited by John Miles; and 'Quaker Voices on Mental Health', with 12 very different chapters written by, and for, Friends.

Quacks are the printers and publishers so this is a 'Quack Quack party'. It is a celebration as well as a thank you to all those who are involved and who advocate for the Tuke legacy beyond Quakers.

If you are aware of the books and/or you are interested in mental health and would like to find out more then you should be at New Earswick

meeting house on Saturday 21st June between 2 pm and 5 pm. RSVP to Rosie Roberts, who is here today.

- ii) Catherine Putz has information on a Day of Learning on 'Healing and repair of Relationships' in relation to Historic and Continuing Justice. This will take place at Huddersfield meeting house on Saturday 7th June from 10 am to 16.30. Catherine and Richard Jarvis are both here and have more details.

5. Racial Justice Group Update

Rosie Roberts has spoken about the work of the Tuke family in connection with Racial Justice. Apart from the founding of the Retreat, William Tuke and his family campaigned over many years for the abolition of slavery, in opposition to companies such as the East India Company.

George Fox asked: what canst thou say? The Tuke family spoke in similar terms of: what we can do. Do we ask similar questions of our friends and families in 2025? Can we share how we overcome feelings of helplessness in facing such matters?

We are asked to consider two questions: What can I say? What can I do?

Responses were shared with Rosie and the racial justice group.

6. Afternoon Session

We have welcomed Bridget Holtom to our afternoon session. Bridget is Engagement and Faith in Action Lead in QPSW. She works alongside Friends to support Quaker activism, having previously been the first BYM Local Development Worker in Yorkshire.

It is appropriate that we are considering peace today as this is the theme for Yearly Meeting 2025

She wanted to inspire us as to what is happening in UK and internationally and how we can uphold her colleagues, and from the perspective of how Bridget can be of service to us. The aim would be to allow us to walk in peace and make lives less stressful, on an individual and group basis.

The session started by exploring harmony and disharmony using our voices. A moment of peace and stillness brought a sense of 'winding down' as we held our breath and felt an inner peace. How would individuals characterise that peace: a texture, a smell, a feeling? How would others see it?

How is peace reflected in our inter-personal relations? What does 'unpeace' or discomfort feel like?

We have heard stories of how Friends have been inspired by the actions of others, and how they might support peaceful efforts to create a more sustainable world. There are many programmes connected with QPSW and there is an online opportunity to join with others to hear of what is being undertaken in our name. Programmes include action on jury service, commemorating the work of conscientious objectors, their support for Quaker Roots, the multi-faith meeting outside New Scotland Yard following the intrusion into Westminster MH, and peace education. It is not easy to focus when there is so much to do but the QPSW committee plays a strong role in support.

We heard of meetings putting their faith into action and then asking QPSW to provide further support. Our messages of peace for ourselves and for sharing with the world were on our minds in a longer period of worship sharing. It is important that we uphold those working for peace or for speaking out against violence. Do we create space for everyone's truth to be heard? Can we offer support to all asylum seekers and refugees?

There are three roles in the drama triangle: perpetrator, victim and rescuer. How can we change these roles to the positive? Find a space for peace before responding.

Friends can share their thoughts and messages of peace to the world.

We thank Bridget for providing us with such a full and inspiring session and for showing how we consider peace and our actions within both an individual and a wider context.

7. Thanks to Doncaster Friends and those supporting the meeting

We thank the Friends at Doncaster LM and Sheffield and Balby AM for their excellent hospitality and for the arrangements that have helped to make today a success.

We thank Paul Parker and Bridget Holtom for being with us today and giving an inspiring lead to our thoughts on the future after simplification in Yorkshire and peace. In addition, Jo Baynham helped to make the technical aspects work well through his expertise and complemented the efforts of David Heslop to make this blended meeting work.

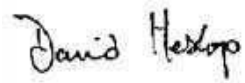
8. Concluding Minute

There being no further business to be taken today, we conclude. We intend to meet again in person at Harrogate Meeting House on Saturday 19th July 2025, should nothing occur to prevent.



David Bunney

Clerk



David Heslop

Assistant Clerk